

**United States**  
**Department of the Interior**  
**Bureau of Land Management**

*Miles City Field Office*

**Abarr Pipeline**  
**Range Improvement Project**

Environmental Assessment (EA)  
DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2013-0025-EA

*For Further Information Please Contact:*

Bureau of Land Management  
Miles City Field Office  
111 Garryowen Road  
Miles City, Montana 59301  
406-233-2800

BLM



**UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT REVIEW**

<b>OFFICE/AREA:</b> Miles City Field Office	<b>DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2013-0025-EA</b>
	<b>DATE POSTED:</b> October 25, 2012
<b>NAME:</b> Abarr Pipeline EA	<b>DATE DUE:</b> November 15, 2012
<b>LOCATION:</b> McCone County T22N R45E, Sec.'s 29, 30, 31, 32	<b>FUNDING:</b> L81000000.LXRIE

<b>ORIGINATOR DATE/INITIALS</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENT</b>
Kirk Anderson	Rangeland Management Specialist	ALL

<b>REVIEWERS</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENT</b>	<b>DATE/INITIALS</b>
Doug Melton	Archeologist	Cultural/Paleo	11/11/12 and 12/11/12 DM Cultural Reports MT-020-12-297 and MT-030-13-63
Jesse Hankins	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife	<b>JCH 12/12/12</b>
Reyer Rens	Supervisory RMS	Review	RR 12/17/2012

  
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**ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR**

1/3/2013  
**DATE**

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**EA NUMBER:** DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2013-0025-EA

**RIPS#**

**PROPOSED ACTION/TITLE TYPE:** Abarr Pipeline

**LOCATION OF PROPOSED ACTION:** T22N R45E, Sec.'s 29, 30, 31, 32

**PREPARING OFFICE:** Miles City Field Office

**DATE OF PREPARATION:** August 8, 2012

**CONFORMANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAND USE PLAN:** This proposed action is in conformance with the Big Dry RMP ROD approved in 1996, as amended by the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing for Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota ROD approved in 1997. The Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing for Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota ROD states on page 11 “guidelines are best management practices, treatments and techniques, and implementation of range improvements...” Page 14 of the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing for Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota ROD says “guidelines are provided to maintain or improve resource conditions in uplands and riparian habitats available to livestock grazing.”

**PURPOSE AND NEED:** The purpose and need for this project is to provide additional water sources on the Abarr AMP Allotment that will help to improve distribution and enable the operator to implement the management plan as written. This pipeline will be used and designed exclusively for summer use. Additional water sources will allow livestock to access additional forage throughout the allotment and alleviate the need to open the gates in the allotment in order to water the permitted livestock. The few water sources on the allotment are primarily on private lands and have been historically heavily used. This has resulted in changes in species composition to a less desirable plant community.

**PROPOSED ACTION:** The proposed action is to install approximately 22,700 feet of pipeline and five stock water tanks on BLM administered lands. The majority of the pipeline will be routed along existing two-track roads. The trench will be less than 12 inches wide and be at a depth of 1 to 3 feet. The vegetation immediately along the route may be mowed (at a width of approximately 8 feet), in order to improve effectiveness of backfilling to prevent washing along the trench. Sandy areas where there are slopes greater than 10% will need to have water bars to eliminate risk of the trench washing out. High density pipe will be laid in the trench and will then be backfilled. Hydrants will be installed at the locations identified on the attached map and will provide water to the tank locations identified on the map. Once authorization for this project is completed a contract will be let by the BLM to install the pipeline and hydrants as described above. The grazing permittee will be required to set up the pump at the existing well and install tanks according to BLM specifications. A bird ladder for each tank will be provided by the BLM. All work should be completed within the summer of 2013.

**ALTERNATIVE 1- NO ACTION:** The “no action” alternative would be to not allow the construction of the pipeline. The existing water sources, including primarily reservoirs, would continue to supply water for livestock on the allotment as they currently do. Patterns of use by livestock would remain the same as under current management.

### **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT:**

The following critical resources have been evaluated and are not affected by the proposed action or the alternatives in this EA:

<b>Mandatory Item</b>	<b>Potentially Impacted</b>	<b>No Impact</b>	<b>Not Present On Site</b>
Threatened and Endangered Species			X
Floodplains			X
Wilderness Values			X
ACECs			X
Water Resources		X	
Air Quality		X	
Cultural or Historical Values		X	
Prime or Unique Farmlands			X
Wild & Scenic Rivers			X
Wetland/Riparian			X
Native American Religious Concerns			X
Wastes, Hazardous or Solids			X
Invasive, Nonnative Species		X	
Environmental Justice			X

*The following non-critical resources will not be impacted by this proposed action; therefore they will not be analyzed in detail by this Environmental Assessment: Forestry, hydrology, lands/realty, geology/minerals, socio-economics, and recreation.*

**Cultural:** The proposed action was inventoried for cultural resources in June 2012. No cultural sites, paleontological localities, and one isolated find were observed along the pipeline route. The isolate is not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (See BLM Cultural Resources Report MT-020-12-297). The location of easternmost tank was moved and the pipeline extended in November 2012. This portion of the pipeline was examined and one isolated find was recorded near the tank location. The isolate is not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The proposed action would have no effect to historic properties (See BLM Cultural Resources Report MT-020-13-63).

**Grazing Administration:** The Abarr allotment is managed under an Allotment Management plan and the permit is as follows:

GR # 2502318

<b>Abarr Allotment</b>	<b>Livestock</b>		<b>Grazing Period</b>		<b>% PL</b>	<b>Type Use</b>	<b>AUMs</b>
<b># 00359</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Kind</b>	<b>Begin</b>	<b>End</b>			
<b>Abarr (AMP)</b>	91	C	5/01	11/27	88	Active	556

Total Active AUMs: 556

#### **Terms and Conditions:**

Line 1: Grazing of the Abarr AMP allotment will be in accordance with the approved Mendenhall Ranch Allotment Management Plan. Actual use reports will be due within 15 days of livestock coming off the AMP pastures.

**Livestock Grazing:** Livestock grazing in the allotment occurs during the summer season in accordance with the permit shown above. The allotment is comprised of two main pastures that are primarily BLM lands. The pastures that are comprised of mainly BLM lands have no dependable water and have been used in conjunction with private land with gates being left open. Although an allotment management plan is in

place the rotation cannot be followed due to the lack of water on the allotment.

Soils: Ecosites identified along the pipeline route include the Silty 10-14 inch, Shallow 10-14 inch precip., and Sandy 10-14 inch precip. The soils types identified in the project area have slight to moderate erodibility ratings and have good potential for revegetation. Slopes in the project area are 0 to 5% through most of the area with some steeper grades near creek crossings. Sandy areas where there are slopes greater than 10% will need to have water bars to eliminate risk of the trench washing out.

Vegetation: The allotment has been assessed for Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Management in 1999. The allotment met standards for the Miles City Field Office through an in-house evaluation. The dominant vegetation within the allotment is western wheatgrass, prairie junegrass, needleandthread, blue grama, bluebunch wheatgrass and threadleaf sedge. There are also sandy upland areas that can be dominated by little bluestem and prairie sandreed. The uplands in this allotment have received very light grazing use and there is good residual cover found throughout these pastures along with vegetation communities that are in high to moderate seral condition. No known surveys for special status plant species have been conducted.

Wildlife: Wildlife game species in the area include mule deer, white-tailed deer, pronghorn, sage-grouse, and sharp-tailed grouse. Non-game species such as raptors, migratory birds, and various small mammals, reptiles and amphibians also inhabit or frequent the area. BLM Sensitive Species are known to inhabit or frequent the area; however no Threatened or Endangered species or habitat for such is known to exist. The Abarr Allotment has three identified sharp-tailed grouse leks on BLM lands within the boundary and several others in adjacent allotments. The allotment is classified as pronghorn and mule deer winter range. A ferruginous hawk nest of unknown activity is located in the NE1/4 of Sec 29, Township 22 North, Range 45 East.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:**

### **DESCRIPTION OF IMPACTS FROM PROPOSED ACTION:**

Cultural: The proposed action would have no impact on cultural resources. No cultural sites or paleontological localities were observed in the inventory of the proposed pipeline and tank locations. The proposed action would have no effect to historic properties. Unanticipated discoveries of cultural materials found during construction would be subject to the stipulation attached to this document and the cultural resource requirements of the cooperative agreement for the project.

Grazing Administration: The permit for the Abarr Allotment is not affected by the proposed project.

Livestock Grazing: Livestock distribution will be improved in the North and South pasture with construction of the pipeline and installation of tanks. These pastures will be grazed in conjunction with private lands and will not be grazed until June each year. This early deferment should allow conditions on the allotment to maintain the existing condition and improve distribution out of the draw bottoms where green ash and buffalo berry dominated areas occur. Better livestock distribution should result in improved conditions in areas that are currently grazed heavily, while increasing use in areas of secondary range near proposed tank locations.

Soils: The process of cutting and moving soil on to the existing fill will cause soil disturbances that result in soil mixing, compaction, and removal of ground cover. Compaction of soils will occur due to equipment operation. Compaction will expose the soil to accelerated erosion by wind and water, decrease nutrient cycling, and increase runoff until the site returns to natural rates due to freeze-thaw cycles. Mixing and

compaction will potentially affect surface and subsurface biota, specifically reducing productivity and biodiversity. Accelerated soil erosion from wind and water could occur during and shortly after project construction. Once construction is completed and vegetation is reestablished, erosion, compaction, and productivity should return to natural rates.

Vegetation: Localized vegetative disturbance will occur within the trenched area, however this impact will heal itself and become less evident with time, usually within two growing seasons. These areas may become weedy with annual vegetation as a result of the livestock use, however the disturbance is considered minimal. While the route of the pipeline was change to avoid going through the spotted knapweed that was located, the potential for spread of weeds along the creek would increase under the proposed action, and additional monitoring for new weed infestations would be needed.

Wildlife: Wildlife species will likely be displaced during construction activities. These impacts are expected to be short term in nature as construction activities should last no more than two weeks. Surface disturbance and excavation is likely to destroy ground nesting species, nests, and/or burrowing animals if present during construction; however, with the proposed timing of work to occur in the fall, it is not anticipated that ground nesting bird species would be affected.

The pipeline route as proposed follows an existing two-track over the majority of the route.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF IMPACTS FROM ALTERNATIVE 1- No Action:**

Cultural: There would be no impact to cultural or paleontological resources if the no action alternative is selected.

Grazing Administration: The grazing permit for Abarr Allotment is not affected by this alternative.

Livestock Grazing: Livestock grazing would continue under the current management. Livestock would continue to use the areas that are currently receiving heavier use. Over all the allotment would be expected to continue meeting the Standards for Rangeland Health; however the Management Plan for the allotment, as written would not be implementable.

Soils: The soil will not be disturbed on public land. Compaction of soils will not occur due to equipment operation and existing soil conditions will remain as they occur today.

Vegetation: Vegetation will not be disturbed on public land. Vegetation in areas currently receiving heavy use would continue, and species composition would be expected to change to one dominated by less desirable species. The threat of spreading noxious weeds would be present, but not as great as it would if a pipeline is installed along the proposed route.

Wildlife: The no-action alternative would result in no direct habitat loss or wildlife disturbance on public lands.

#### **CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

There will be no other cumulative impacts from this project in addition to those identified in the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management EIS completed in August of 1997. Those cumulative impacts include population increase or decrease, agricultural subsidies, economic competition, and restructuring, wildlife use, management practices and land use changes such as increase recreation use. A detailed discussion of these cumulative impacts can be found on Pages 27 and 28 of the Standards and Guidelines EIS.

**MITIGATION:** Construction will not occur between March 1 to June 15<sup>th</sup> on public lands in order to protect sharp-tailed grouse strutting, nesting, and early brood rearing activities. Construction will not occur between December 1 and March 31 in order to protect overwintering big game. Construction activities will not occur between April 15 and July 15 in order to protect migratory bird species.

Cultural Resources: The individual/contractor shall immediately bring to the attention of the BLM Field Manager any and all antiquities or other items of cultural or scientific interest, including but not limited to historic or prehistoric ruins, fossils, artifacts or burials discovered as a result of his operations, and shall leave such discoveries intact until told to proceed by the BLM Field Manager

**CONSULTATION/COORDINATION: permittee**

**LIST OF PREPARERS:**

**Kirk Anderson, Rangeland Management Specialist**

**Jesse Hankins, Wildlife Biologist**

**Doug Melton, Archeologist**

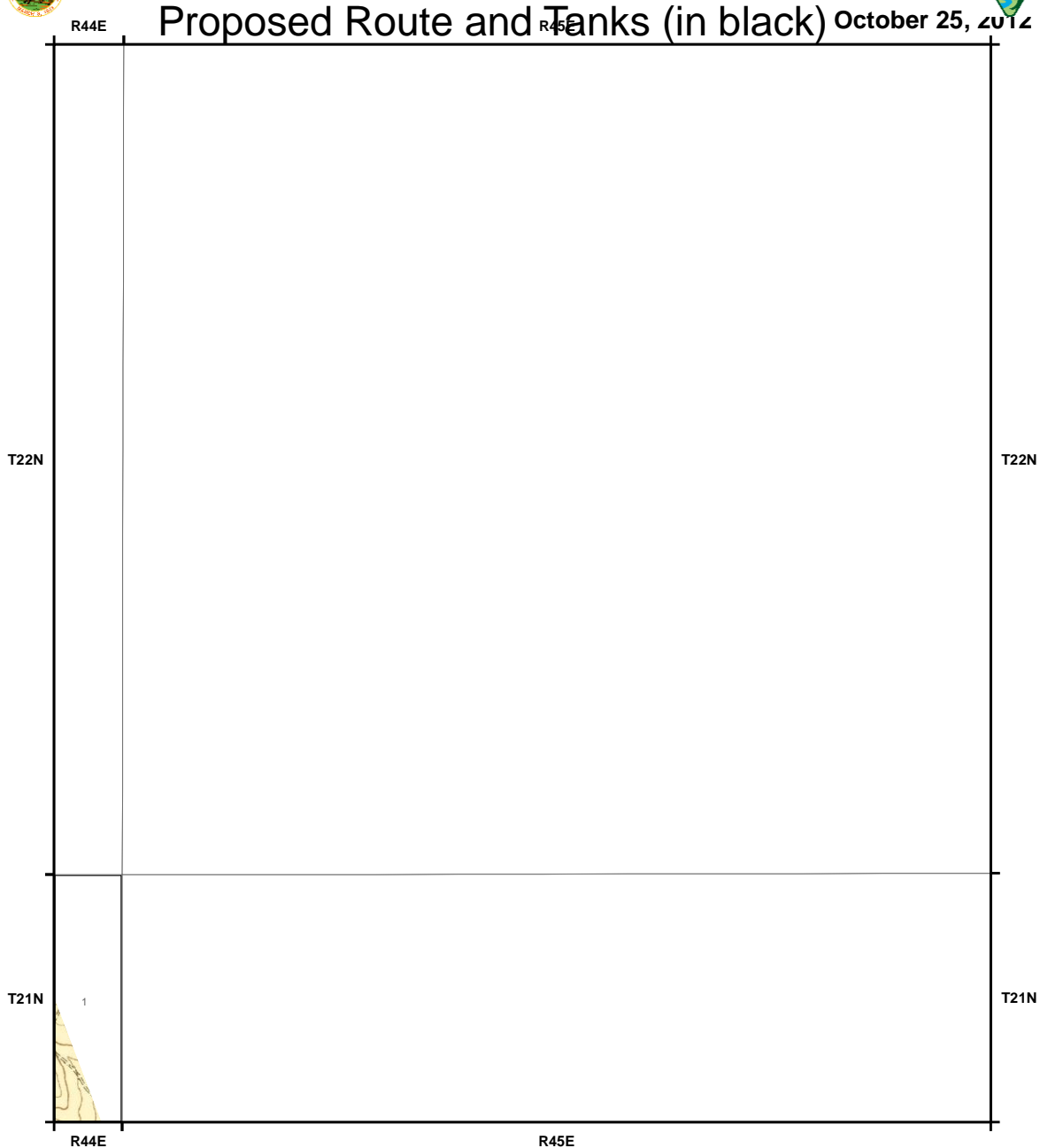
**Curt Kunugi, Civil Engineer**

**Reyer Rens, Supervisory Rangeland Management Specialist**

**Kathleen Bockness, Environmental Coordinator**



# Abarr Pipeline



8

1:24,000

0.08 0.14 0.21 Miles

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
MILES CITY FIELD OFFICE

**CAUTION:**  
Land ownership data is derived from less accurate data than the 1:24000 scale base map. Therefore, land ownership may not be shown for parcels smaller than 40 acres, and land ownership lines may have plotting errors due to source data.





**UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
MILES CITY FIELD OFFICE  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
Abarr Pipeline EA  
DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2013-0025-EA**

**BACKGROUND**

The origin of the environmental assessment was due to a request from the permittee to extend a stock water pipeline in order to connect two existing water systems.

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

On the basis of the information contained in the EA (DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2013-0025-EA), and all other information available to me, it is my determination that:

- (1) The implementation of the Proposed Action or alternatives will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the Big Dry Resource Management Plan, as amended by the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing for Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota Record of Decision approved in 1997.
- (2) The Proposed Action is in conformance with the Record of Decision for the Big Dry Resource Management Plan, as amended; and
- (3) The Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment.

Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR '1508.27), both with regard to the context and to the intensity of the impacts described in the EA or as articulated in the letters of comment.

**Context**

The proposed action is to install approximately 22,700 feet of pipeline and five stock water tanks on BLM administered lands. The majority of the pipeline will be routed along existing two-track roads. The trench will be less than 12 inches wide and be at a depth of 1 to 3 feet. The vegetation immediately along the route may be mowed (at a width of approximately 8 feet), in order to improve effectiveness of backfilling to prevent washing along the trench. Sandy areas where there are slopes greater than 10% will need to have water bars to eliminate risk of the trench washing out. High density pipe will be laid in the trench and will then be backfilled. Hydrants will be installed at the locations identified on the attached map and will provide water to the tank locations identified on the map. Once authorization for this project is completed a contract will be let by the BLM to install the pipeline and hydrants as described above. The grazing permittee will be required to set up the pump at the existing well and install tanks according to BLM specifications. A bird ladder will be provided by the BLM. All work should be completed within the summer of 2013.

## **Intensity**

I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from the Abarr Pipeline decision relative to each of the ten areas suggested for consideration by the CEQ. With regard to each:

- 1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.** The EA considered both potential beneficial and adverse effects. None of the effects are beyond the range of effects analyzed in the Big Dry RMP.
- 2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.** No aspect of the proposed action would have an effect on public health and safety.
- 3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity of historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** There are no known historic or cultural resource sites that would be affected by the proposed action. A pre-project cultural resource survey was conducted in conjunction with the location of the EA and did not result in the discovery of significant cultural properties (See report number listed in the environmental assessment).. There would be no effect to historic properties. Unanticipated discoveries of cultural resources during project construction are subject to the cultural resource stipulation in the cooperative agreement for the project. There are no parks, prime farmlands, WSAs, ACECs, or wild and scenic rivers in the planning area.
- 4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** The effects of the actions planned under the proposed action are similar to many other rangeland improvement projects implemented within the scope of the Big Dry RMP, as amended. “Highly controversial” in the context of 40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(4), refers to substantial disagreement within the scientific community about the environmental effects of a proposed action. No unique or appreciable scientific controversy has been identified regarding the effects of the proposed action.
- 5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The analysis has not shown that there would be any unique or unknown risks to the human environment.
- 6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** This project neither establishes a precedent nor represents a decision in principle about future actions. The proposed action is consistent with actions appropriate for the area as designated by the Big Dry RMP.
- 7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** The environmental analysis did not reveal any cumulative effects beyond those already analyzed in the EISs which accompanied the Big Dry RMP.
- 8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.** The proposed action will not adversely affect any district, site, highway, structure, or object listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.
- 9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.** There are no

threatened or endangered species or habitat in the area of the proposed action. There are no threatened or endangered plant species or habitat in the area.

**10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.** The proposed action does not threaten to violate any Federal, State, or local law.



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Todd D. Yeager  
Field Manager  
Miles City Field Office

01/08/2013

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Date



**UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
MILES CITY FIELD OFFICE  
DECISION RECORD  
Abarr Pipeline EA  
DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2013-0025-EA**

**DECISION**

It is my decision to select the Proposed Action Alternative with the applied mitigation as described in the Abarr Pipeline EA. The EA and the FONSI analyzed the selected alternative and found no significant impacts. Implementation of this decision will result in rangeland improvement activities, including the construction of approximately 22,700 feet of stock water pipeline for use in the Abarr Allotment. All design features identified in the EA will be implemented. The selected alternative is in conformance with the Big Dry Resource Management Plan, as amended.

**ALTERNATIVES**

In addition to the selected alternative, the EA considered one (1) other alternative. The "No Action" alternative, and would carry out no management activities at this time.

**RATIONALE FOR SELECTION**

The purpose of the action is to install a pipeline and five tanks in the Abarr allotment in order to effectively implement the management plan. Livestock distribution will be improved and vegetative conditions will be maintained or improved under the management outlined in the AMP.

The No Action Alternative would carry out no management actions thus not meeting the purpose and need. The current system would result in no rotation in grazing and the North and South pastures of the allotment would be grazed along with private lands where there is dependable water.

The selected alternative meets the purpose of the proposed action. It would ensure that the deferred rotation system currently in place will continue to be implemented.. The No Action Alternative would not meet the purpose and need of the project.

**CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

The permittee and a civil engineering technician were consulted. The Abarr Pipeline EA was made available online via the Miles City Field Office NEPA log.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

Once the Abarr Pipeline EA, FONSI, and Decision Record are approved by the Authorized Officer, the BLM would receive bids and award a contract for the installation of the pipeline and hydrants and the permittee would then be responsible for installing tanks at each hydrant location.

**ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES**

The following sections of the Code of Federal Regulations, chapter 43- §4120 and §4160 provide authority for the actions proposed in this decision. The language of the cited sections can be found at a library designated as a federal depository or at the following web address:

[http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wo/Information\\_Resources\\_Management/policy/im\\_attachments/2007.Par.69047.File.dat/IM2007-137\\_att1.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wo/Information_Resources_Management/policy/im_attachments/2007.Par.69047.File.dat/IM2007-137_att1.pdf)

Any applicant, permittee, lessee or other affected interest may protest a proposed decision under Sec. 43 CFR§4160.1. Any protest shall be made in person or in writing within 15 days after receipt of this proposed decision to:

Todd D. Yeager  
Field Office Manager  
Bureau of Land Management, Miles City Field Office  
111 Garryowen Road  
Miles City, MT 59301

The protest, if filed, should clearly and concisely state the reason(s) why the proposed decision is in error. In the absence of a protest, the proposed decision will become my final decision without further notice.

Appeal: Any applicant, permittee, lessee, or other person whose interest is adversely affected by the final decision may file an appeal in accordance with 43 CFR 4.470 and 43 CFR 4160.1-4. The appeal may be accompanied by a petition for stay of the decision in accordance with CFR 4.21, pending final determination of an appeal. The appeal and decision for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer, as noted above, within 30 days following receipt of the final decision, or within 30 days after the date the proposed decision becomes final.

The appeal shall state the reasons, clearly and concisely, why the appellant thinks the final decision is in error and otherwise comply with the provisions of 43 CFR 4.470 which is available from the BLM office for your use in a BLM office.

The appeal, or the appeal and petition for stay, must be in writing and delivered in person, via the United States Postal Service mail system, or other common carrier, to the Miles City Field Office as noted above. The BLM does not accept appeals by facsimile or email.

In accordance with 43 CFR§4.21(b)(1), a petition for stay, if filed, must show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- 1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
- 2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits
- 3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- 4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.



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Todd D. Yeager  
Field Manager  
Miles City Field Office

1/08/2013

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Date

